DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 151 887 CS 502 032

AUTHOR Backlund, Philip M.
TITLE Issues in Communication Competency Theory.
PUB DATE Dec 77
NOTE 27p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association (63rd, Washington, D.C., December 1-4, 1977)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$2.06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Communication (Thought Transfer); *Communication Skills; *Concept Formation; Conceptual Schemes; Definitions; *Information Theory; *Linguistic Competence; *Models; *Speech Communication

ABSTRACT

"Communication competence" refers to the knowledge an individual has about the use of language in communication. As a concept and theory, however, it needs to be further elaborated and clarified. In particular, four issues must be resolved before communication competence theory can achieve full development and exert impact in the classroom. The first issue is one of definition. Current definitions are inconsistent--some of them consider competence a cognitive factor, while others consider it a behavioral factor. The second issue concerns the levels at which an individual possesses communication competence; it appears that both knowledge and skill are needed, but these levels need to be clarified. The third issue involves the problem of distinguishing competence from similar concepts, such as interpersonal competence and communication effectiveness. Three points are relevant to this issue: social judgment, criteria, and educational implications. The fourth issue that needs to be resolved concerns the determination of dimensions and variables associated with communication competence including function, process, interaction, skill, and development. (CC)

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ISSUES IN COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE THEORY

A Paper

by

Philip M. Backlund

Utica College

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Presented at the Annual Convention of the
Speech Communication Association
Washington, D. C., 1977

CS 502 032

INTRODUCTION

The educational process in the United States has come under ever increasing scrutiny in the past decade. Beginning with the "Sputnik" controversy of the late 1950's and moving through the university protests of the late 1960's, the ways and means of American education have come under attack.

As a result of the criticisms stemming from general social concern and from statistics relating to a decline in standarized test scores, many educators have recognized a need to develop more "functional" educational strategies (Williams and Naremore, 1969). The focus appears to be shifting from content or subject matter concerns to the question of "what skills or abilities do students need?" More emphasis is being placed on the identification of what a student should learn in order to function more effectively in different environments and in different situations (Silberman, 1970). The reorientation has led some educators to the concept of competency based education.

Competency based education (and similar concepts, such as minimal competency testing and criterion referenced testing) focuses on the student's acquisition of specific competencies that contribute to his or her mastery of a skill or knowledge area (Hall and Jones, 1976). McClelland (1973) argues that criterion referenced testing is a far more valid way of assessing a student's ability than "intelligence" tests. The argument advanced is that the more areas a student develops competency in, the more effectively that student will be able to function. The ability to assess these competencies is necessary to the development of educational strategies designed to achieve this mastery.

The concept of competency in education requires, for each area of knowledge, the identification of what constitutes competency in that area and the identification of educational methods that may help the student acnieve a competent level of skill in that area. Attempts are generally made to tie the competency levels to specific behaviors that enable the student to function more effectively in the environment.

A variety of scholars (Reusch, 1955; Duncan, 1968; Dance and Larson, 1972, and others) suggest that a relationship exists between an individual's ability to use the communication process and his ability to function in society. Accepting this premise as valid, it may be argued that in order for a person to function competently in society, that person needs to achieve a certain level of competence in the use of language for the purpose of communication. This competence has been termed "communication competence." The clarification of this concept is the overall goal of this paper.

Communication competence is a relatively new concept. The term first gained wide exposure in the writings of Hymes (1971). He used the term to refer to the knowledge an individual has about the use of language in communication. Prior to Hymes' writing, various scholars had discussed similar ideas under different terms, such as linguistic competence and performance, interpersonal competence, and communication effectiveness. Since Hymes, a number of individuals have written about communication competence, but have utilized a variety of definitions. This lack of definitional and theoretical consistency, while common to concepts in their developmental stages, points to a need for further

clarification and elaboration of this concept if a useful theory is to be developed.

The purpose of this paper is to attempt to further clarify the concept of and the theory of communication competence. Four issues that appear to effect theory development in communication competence are examined. The first is the lack of definitional consistency evident in the writings on communication competence. The second concerns the manner in which a person may "possess" competence. The third concerns the way in which communication competence is distinguised from similar concepts. The fourth concerns the constitution of communication competence, its attributes and dimensions. These four iasues need resolution if communication competence theory is to achieve full development.

DEFINING COMPETENCE

The orderly development of any new theory demands clear, generally acceptable definitions for the key words associated with that theory. A review of current communication competence literature suggests, however, that "communication competence" does not enjoy such a definition. The difficulty appears to stem from the wide range of definitions of the word "competence" found in the literature. These definitions seem to fall into two categories - cognitive and behavioral. This section of the paper will describe these categories, indicate possible effects on theory development, and discuss resolution of the uncertainty over the definition of the word "competence."

Cognitive Definitions The definitions that fall into this class generally conceive of "competence" as being a mental

phenomenon distinct and separated from behavior. Rubin (1977) provides an example of this usage:

> Namath is competent to be quarterback, it is just that he chases women too much.

Here competence is indicative of potential performance or capability. Namath has the potential to be a good quarterback, but factors exist that inhibit his performance. Competence, in this instance, is separated from behavior.

Chomsky (1965) has been the most influential contributor to the cognitive conception of competence. In developing his theory of grammar, Chomsky describes two different aspects of linguistics: competence and performance. In his conception of linguistic competence, Chomsky concentrated on the nature of linguistic knowledge and avoids factors of performance. By avoiding behavioral concerns, Chomsky attempts to describe the type of knowledge the ideal speaker-listener supposedly has in order to create and understand the sentences of the language. Linguistic competence is generally defined as the individual's knowledge of the structure of the language (Chomsky, 1965). Language behavior is subsequently developed by Chomsky and others under the concept of performance (Chomsky, 1965; Smithworth and Daswani, 1974). Competence, as seen by Chomsky, is separated from actual behavior.

This conception of competence appears in other writings on communication competence, notably Rubin (1977). Rubin states that "competence theories are not about behavior at all, but rather pertain to the cognitive structure underlying behavior (p. 15)." Pylyshyn (1972) supports this position by suggesting that

> ...(a competence theory is) committed to the beleif that underlying observed behavior is a more perfect mathematical

> structure. Indeed, its concern is not with behavior per se, but rather with how information about the world is presented in a person's mind which make it possible for him to perform the way he does or the way he could perform under a variety of circumstances (p. 548).

For Rubin, Chomsky, Pylyshyn, and others, the goal of competence theories is not the explanation of events or processes, but rather the discovery of the cognitive structure and mental representations that underlie events. This type of competence theory seeks to remove the limitations of both performance and of individuals so that an idealized, finite set of formal rules that underlie behavior may be developed. For communication competence, the goal then would be to develop a set of formalized rules that would act as a generative source for specific communication events.

Rubin rightly claims that an understanding of underlying cognitive structure is a necessary condition for the establishment of a theory of actual behavior. An accurate description of the non-behavioral aspects of the communication process is necessary for a complete understanding of the communicative behavior of individuals. This raises an obvious question. Should communication competence theory be limited to this cognitive dimension, to the finite set of formal rules that underlie behavior?

Behavioral Definitions. Some would answer "no." The second category of definitions includes specific reference to areas beyond the cognitive, to communication behavior. Rubin (1977) again provides an example of this type of usage.

> Namath is one competent quarterback and worth every cent he is getting.

The above statement indicates that Namath has mastered the art of quarterbacking and can demonstrate that ability in the appropriate setting. Namath's skills (competence) are observable by anyone.

A behavioral view of competence has its roots more in common usage than in developed theory. A dictionary defines competence (a reflection of general societal usage) as "having suitable or sufficient skill, knowledge, experience, etc. (Stein and Urdang, 1971). Some scholars tie competence specifically to effective behavior. Argyris (1965) states that "the competence in a living organism means its fitness or ability to carry on those transactions with the environment which result in its maintaining itself, growing, and flourishing (p. 59)." This notion is supported by White (1959) who maintained that competence refers to an organism's capacity to interact effectively with its environment.

Writers in communication competence also place emphasis on the behavioral aspect of competence. Hymes (1971) defined communication competence as

> ...the most general term for the speaking and hearing capabilities of a person. Competence is understood to be dependent on two things: (tacit)knowledge and (ability for) use (p. 16, parentheses in original).

In this instance, Hymes' view of competence is an expansion of Chomsky's use. Hymes believes that performance (behavior) also has its own underlying knowledge. He argues that rather than limiting competence to grammatical concerns, it needs to be expanded to the entire sphere of abilities manifested in speech. Competence remains (as in Chomsky's use) underlying knowledge, but is expanded to include all the aspects of knowledge that effect communicative behavior. Riccillo (1974) summarizes Hymes' view. "Linguistic competence is knowledge of the language and communication competence is knowledge for knowing when and how to use the utterances of a language (p. 108)."

This inclusion of lnaguage use in a conception of communication competence is echoed by Allen and Brown (1976). They state that

> communication competence, unlike linguistic competence, involves awareness of the transaction that occur between people. Competence in this perspective, is tied to actual performance of the language in social situations (p. 248).

Here, competence is tied not only to language use, but to the social situation or context in which language is used. This view of competence, in contrast to the cognitive view, does not seek an idealized set of rules, but a conception of competence that centers on the relationship of the individual to his environment.

Discussion A strong case can be made for both views of the word "competence." If a coherent theory of communication competence is to be developed, a definition of this key word must be decided on. The primary question remains. What definition best serves the goal of a theory of communication competence?

While the goals of a theory of communication competence are not clear or agreed upon, the primary consideration appears to be the need to understand the communication abilities necessary for adquate functioning in general society. Many shcolars have concentrated on how to make the study of communication competence useful to the individual. Hymes (1971) supports this concenration and criticizes linguists for their lack of concern for functional use. He asserts that

> ...the lack of socio-cultural factors in linguistic theory is more than just a legitimate simplifying device of the sort which any scientific theory demands. It appears to reveal an ideological aspect of the modern standpoint; that underlying structure is taken as an endpoint in itself and linguistic use is devalued. This is in contrast to classical antiquity, when structure was a means to use, and grammar subordinate to rhetoric (p. 5).

This belief is supported by Williams and Naremore (1969):

> However, much that is currently written with the orientation upon language differences, placed the stress upon language form at the expense of language function. The consequence is that compensatory programs, just as in much language instruction in the elementary school, places the emphasis upon the learning of new language forms and it is not always clear just how functionally relevant such forms are to the child (p. 100).

In the preface to the book Developing Communication Competence in Children, Allen and Brown (1976) underscore the significance of this function in communication studies with reference to the educational process. They suggest

> ...1) that functional speech communication behaviors are of such crucial significance that they must be emphasized progressively throughout the school experience and 2) that our nation's schools have largely ignored the functional communication needs of children and youth (p. v).

While not conclusive, these quotations give evidence that much of the work in communication competence has been undertaken with the goal in mind of creating a better understanding of actual communicative behavior.

If one accepts this as a goal of a theory of communication competence, then perhaps communication competence needs a broad definition. This conception of competence would include both behavioral and nonbehavioral dimensions, cognitive and psychomotor, and include (as Hymes states) all the critical factors that influence communicative behavior.

POSSESSION OF COMPETENCE

The potential utility of the approach described above can be illustrated by a discussion of a second issue facing a theory of communication competence. This issue concerns the manner in which an individual possesses communication competence. As with

the previous issue, current views are overlapping and sometimes contradictory. Rubin (1977) in describing a cognitive view of competence, holds that "strictly speaking, individuals do not have competence (p. 14)." Writers in a more behavioral view use a wide range of terms to indicate possession, including knowledge, skill, ability, awareness, use, and performance. Is communication competence a skill? a body of knowledge? an ability? For both theory and educational purposes, the level on which the individual possesses competence must be determined.

One aspect of this issue is the question of intent. Does a person need to make a conscious decision about what he will or will not do in order to be judged communicatively competent? Or is the exhibition of competent behavior sufficient evidence of the possession of competence? In approaching this issue, one may look at the difference between knowledge, skill, and behavior.

Scheffler (1965) discusses this distinction. He divided ability into subclasses of "facility" and "critical skill." Facilities are seen as automatic behavior that are not processed cognitively. Critical skills are acquired through training and are improved by practice requiring strategic judgment. Critical skills require conscious knowledge while facilities do not.

Scheffler differentiates between "knowing that" as a propositionally based term and "knowing how" as a procedural term. For Scheffler,

> 'knowing how to' represents the possession of a skill, a trained capacity, a competence, or a technique. We discussed skills earlier and distinguished them from traits, habits, or propensities, as well as from attainments--i.e., appreciation and understanding. Certainly having a skill is also quite different from knowing <u>that</u> the skill is such

> and such. A person might well have all the relevant information concerning some skill without having the skill itself, and conceivably, he might be skilled without having any given piece of information concerning the skill in question, though it is unlikely he would lack all relevant information (p. 92).

For Scheffler, skills are the connections between knowledge and behavior. Recalling the discussion of communication competence by Hymes (1971) and noting his emphasis on language use in interaction, perhaps proficiency in skills, as described by Scheffler, would be what is required for the manifestation of communication competence.

Polyani (1958) gives a description of how cognitive rules that underlie skills are determined. This description may be applicable to the relationship of knowledge and skill to communication competence. He states that

> ...the premises of a skill cannot be discovered focally, prior to its performance, not even understood if explicitly stated by others, before ourselves have experienced its performance, whether by watching it or by engaging in it ourselves. In perfomring a skill we are therefore acting on certain premises of which we are focally ignorant, but which we know subsidiarily as part of our mastery of that skill, and which we may get to know focally by analyzing the way we achieve success (or what we believe to be success) in the skill in question. The rules of success which we thus derive can help us to improve our skill and to teach it to others (p. 162).

Polyani points our that the cognitve aspects of a skill are derived solely from observing behavior (our own or that of others). Thus a theory of communication competence must be grounded in the observation of behavior. Both knowledge and skill, as described by Scheffler and Polyani, allow one to "function." If tne level of knowledge and skill is sufficiently high, then one may be able to infer that the person is competent. If these skills are in the area of communication, then one would be able to make statements that would allow one to infer the

individual's communication competence. As to how the individual may possess communication competence, it appears that the individual needs both to know and to know how. These two aspects of knowing may exist both at the overt and the covert levels. The individual appears to possess competence at a number of different levels. A theory of communication competence would needs to clearly describe these different levels so that they may be ultimately applied to educational settings.

RECOGNIZING COMPETENCE

Thethird issue concerns the identification of the phenomenon of competence. Dubin (1969), in his discussion of theory building maintains that a theory must be built on observable and distinct phenomena. In the case of communication competence, what is the phenomenon under observation? How is it recognized? By what criteria does one separate communication competence from similarly defined concepts such as interpersonal competence and communication effectiveness? Three points are relevant here: 1) competence as social judgment, 2) criteria, and 3) educational implications.

Social Judgment It is readily apparent that individuals make judgment about the communication competence of other individuals. If a person were asked, "what time is it?" and the answer came back "Tuesday," that person is likely to be judged as less competent than someone who could give the correct time. This notion of social judgment appears in research on communication competence. Krauss and Glucksberg (1969), Riccillo (1974), Wiemann (1976), and Backlund (1977) all view communication competence as a socially judged phenomena. In these studies, judges evaluated subject's responses on the degree to which the

response met the demands of an initial probe or message. Communication competence (or the lack of it) was a characteristic attributed to an individual by others. If the subject was seen as responding appropriately to the message, then he/she was judged as having a degree of competence. This aspect of social judgment appears to be an unavoidable dimension of communication competence. For even if one hews to the cognitive definition of competence, one is still forced to infer competence from what would be termed "performance data." Assuming then that communication competence needs to be treated as a social judgment phenomenon, the question then rearises; by what criteria is this judgment made? The criterion most commonly referred to is "appropriateness."

Criteria Appropriateness as a determiner of the presence of competence appears in some definitions of communication competence (Hymes, 1971; Wrather, 1976; and Backlund, 1977). Appropriateness generally refers to the ability of an interactant to meet the basic contextual requirements of the situation. These contextual requirements include three divisions. 1) The verbal context, consisting of appropriateness of wording, of statements, and of topic. 2) The relationship context, referring to the type and style of messages appropriate to a particular relationship. 3) The environmental context refers to the effect of the physical environment and the symbolic environment; i.e., a church, a bar, a classroom, etc. Appropriateness then can be seen as the ability of the interactant to meet the contextual requirements of the communicative context so that the demands of appropriateness are met.

Hymes (1971) indicates the centrality of appropriateness in a consideration of communication competence.

> We have to account for the fact that a normal child acquires knowledge of sentences, not only as grammatical but also as appropriate (p. 14).

Wood (1977) writing on developing communication competence in children refers to appropriateness. She states that "communication competence takes a most important second step, it refers to a person's knowledge of how to use language appropriately in all kinds of communication situations (p. 5)." Later, Wood states "a competent communicator, adult or child, weighs multiple factors of communication situations and processes this information to produce appropriate responses (p. 7)." Appropriateness appears to be the only criteria evident in determining communicatively competent behavior.

If appropriateness can be accepted as a determining criterion for communicatively competent behavior, then this criterion can be used to separate communication competence from similar concepts such as interpersonal competence and communication effectiveness. These distinctions are necessary if communication competence is to be considered as a distinct phenomenon.

Tubbs and Moss (1974) define communication effectiveness as occurring when "the stimulus as it was initiated and intended by the sender closely corresponds with the stimulus as it is perceived and responded to by the receiver (p. 9)." Here, accuracy, not appropriateness, is the focal point of judgment. Bearison and Cassel (1975) speak of communication effectiveness as the ability of a speaker to meet his listener's information needs by coordinating his own perspective of the communicated topic

with the perspective of the listener. Again, the emphasis is on accuracy. McCrosky, Larson, and Knapp (1971) provide a broader description of effectiveness:

> There is a wide range of outcomes any one of which might warrant the judgment that communication between two people has been 'effective.' In some cases communication will have been effective if the individuals involved have arrived at a greater understanding of attitudes, sentiments, opinions, etc. In other situations, communication will have been effective if the attitudes or beliefs of one or both parties change as a consequence of the interpersonal encounter. In still other situations, we are interested primarily in being like or evaluated favorably by another (p. 15).

Effectiveness implies attainment of a personal goal beyond that of merely appropriately meeting the demands of the situation. The possession of communication competence may facilitate goal attainment, but it may not be necessary. Communication goals may be attained through inappropriate means. Thus communication competence and communication effectiveness can be separated by the application of the criteria of appropriateness.

Another term sometimes used synonomously with either communication competence or communication effectiveness is "interpersonal competence." Weinstein (1969) defines interpersonal competence as the ability of a person to accomplish interpersonal taks. He states "this is no more than saying that interpersonal competence boils down to the ability to manipulate the responses of the other (p. 755)." Bochner and Kelly (1974) see interpersonal competence as the ability to interact effectively. Three criteria they associate with competence are: 1) the ability to formulate and achieve objectives; 2) the ability to collaborate effectively with others; and 3) the ability to appropirately adapt to situational and environmental variations. Foote and Cottrel (1955) define interpersonal competence as the ability

of an individual to shape the response of others.

As was the case with communication effectiveness, interpersonal competence appears to differ from communication competence in intent and outcome. Intent and outcome in communication competence pertains only to appropriateness, while intent and outcome in interpersonal competence pertain more to the accomplishment of personal goals and to the manipulation of responses of others.

Appropriateness then, appears to be the single criterion with the power to discriminate the phenomenon of communication competence from other communicative phenomena. This single criterion may not be sufficient evidence of the existance of a separate phenomenon labeled communication competence. Other criteria will need to be delineated so as to give a clearer picture of what is called communication competence.

Educational Implications The educational implications of appropriateness are numerous, one will be discussed here. It is relatively obvious, as Hymes (1971) suggests, that judgments of appropriateness differ across speech communities and from situation to situation. Individuals may exhibit different levels of competence across different situations. Speech communication educators would be faced with the task of 1) determining what constituted appropriate behavior in innumerable situations, and 2) devising educational strategies designed to teach children how to communicate in those situations in an appropriate manner.....

This problem may be dealt with by referring back to the conception of competence suggested earlier, viewing competence as a combination of knowledge and skill. Instead of attempting to

directly assess a person's communication competence, attempts can be made to assess the probability of acting in a competent (appropriate) manner. Thus the goal of a theory of communication competence may be predictive. The question would be phrased as follows. Is it possible to predict the probability of a person acting competently by assessing his knowledge and skill in various aspects of the communication process? If the answer is "yes ", what are those aspects of communicative behavior that allows a person to be seen as acting in a competent manner? What are the factors that account for the variance in the judgment of competence? By identifying those areas of knowledge and skill possessed by the individual that account for variance in the perception of competence, a set of educational strategies may be devised. These would be designed to increase the knowledge and skill of students in these areas and thus increase their probability of acting competently in a given situation. These areas of knowledge and skill are discussed in the following section.

DIMENSIONS

The final issue discussed concerns the constitution of communication competence. The communication process is highly complex and a wide range of factors may contribute to the perception of communication competence. Various scholars have proposed sets of functions, skills, and/or knowledge area that can be seen as the more specific dimensions of communication competence. These dimensions need to be clearly delineated. General conceptions of communication competence are provided by a number of sources. Weinstein (1969) gives a sense of the skills

involved when he discusses interpersonal competence:

> Skill at establishing and maintaining desired identities, both for one's self and for others, is pivotal in being interpersonally competent. This skill is dependent in turn on three variables. First, the individual must be able to take the role of the other accurately, he must be able to correctly predict the impact that various lines of action will have on alter's definition of the situation. This is what is meant by empathy if we strip the concept of its affective overtones. Second, the individual must possess a large and varied repertoire of lines of action. Third, the individual must possess the intrapersonalresources to be capable of employing effective tactics in situations where they are appropriate.

Wang (1973) describes very similar aspects of verbal communication skills:

> ...differences found in young children's verbal communication skills are attributed to more than just differences in such linguistic qualities as syntactic structure, vocabulary, and intelligibility. The differences in communication skills are strongly influenced by such factors as the child's ability to take the listener's role, his ability to order and classify relevant information, the nature and amount of feedback information supplied by the listener, and the appropriateness of the response of the speaker to the feedback (p. 1).

These two examples illuminate the type of skill and knowledge the individual may need to possess in order tofunction in a communicatively competent manner. The need exists, however, to become even more specific in the ordering of these factors. A review of the dimensions proposed by various authors suggests that these dimensions may be divided into five categories: 1) dimension related to the functions of speech communication, 2) dimensions related to the process of a communicative event, 3) dimensions related to interaction, 4) dimensions related to the specific skills of the individual, and 5) dimensions related to the developmental processes of communication. The five categories are presented as an iventory of dimensions proposed by various

authors. This inventory is not elaborated upon, but presented to give the reader an idea of the variety and diversity of the dimensions (variable and factors) associated with communication competence.

Functions The first of the categories concerns functions of speech communication. It might be noted here that the word "function" itself also has been used in different ways. Consequently, the word function as used in this paper, includes a broad range of definitions. A review of writings concerning the functions of speech communication and of language yields a list that includes linking, mentation, and regulation (Dance and Larson, 1972); informing, controlling, feeling, ritualizing, and imagining (Allen and Brown, 1976); ideational and relational (Tough, n.d.); and instrumentation, regulation, interaction, personal, heuristic, imaginative, representation, and information Halliday, 1973). The apparent point here seems to be that speech communication may serve a number of functions for the individual who uses language. It might be argued then that the competent communicator would have the ability to use speech and language in performing each of these functions as the individual and the situation require.

Process Speech communication is seen by many as a process, and this process can be broken down into stages (Dance and Larson, 1976). If it is claimed that communication competence deals with actual communication interaction in real settings, then a theory must account for the individual's performance in each of the stages. For example, Allen and Brown (1976) take the view that communication competence is behaviorally oriented and bound

to the situation. They suggest seven stages or steps in the communication process as it pertains to the individual: 1) the repertoire of knowledge, skill, and attidues from which an individual draws in a communicative event; 2) analysis, determining from the communication situation which communicative behavior to use; 3) the goal or function applying to the situation; 4) selection of the actual communicative behavior to be used in the situation: 5) implementing the behavior; 6) evaluation of the effect of the behavior; and 7) adapting subsequent behavior to the feedback received. Thayer (1968) followed a similar pattern. He included four elements, information acquisition, information processing, information generation, and information generation. The point here is that the competent communicator needs to have the skills to be able to move through each of these elements in an optimal manner to insure approriate communicative behavior.

Interaction A third category of dimensions concerns aspects related to the interaction process. The factor most frequently discussed concerning interaction and communication competence is interaction management or rule-governed behavior. A wide variety of research (for example, Mueller, 1972; Rodnick and Wood, 1973; Fogel, 1976; Wiemann, 1976) all discuss the importance of interaction management and rule governed behavior in everyday interaction. Argyle (1969) listed two general interaction skills that relate to this point: 1) the ability to establish and sustain a smooth and easy pattern of interaction, and 2) the ability to maintain control of the interaction without dominating. Wiemann (1976) gave a number of examples of social rules. These included such items as; 1) interuptions of the speaker are discouraged,

2) one person talks at a time, 3) speaker turns must be interchanged, 4) frequent and lengthy pauses should be avoided, and 5) the listener should be perceived as devoting full attention to the encounter. Awareness of the social rules under which one communicates appears to be essential to the competent functioning of an individual. Interaction management is concerned with the "procedural" aspects that structure and maintain an interaction. The performance of these aspects will have a direct bearing on the social judgment of competence.

Skill The fourth category that can be identified is the area of skill based specifically in the individual. In the second category described earlier, the process of communication was divided into stages. The fourth category may be seen as describing the skill necessary to support that process. The first of that process concerns the fathering of information by the individual from the other and from the environment in order to form a response. Skills that might effect that information gathering process include listening, nonverbal sensitivity, social insight (role-taking), willingness to communicate, and open mindedness. Skills related to the processing and evaluation of information might include reasoning ability and critical thinking ability. Skills associated with information generation might include grammatical correctness, appropriate language behavior, appropriate nonverbal behavior, self-disclosure, etc. Skills of this type may be the ones necessary for communicatively competent behavior. These skills may act as supports for the functions and skills described earlier.

Developmental Processes The final cagetory is related to language and communication development processes. The individual learns to communication, and the learning process generally occurs in stages. Developmental sequences have received a great deal of attention from researchers in speech communication, language development, sociology, etc. These discussions will not be summarized here. Some examples will be given to indicate that this too, is a rich source of possible material for a theory of communication competence. Brown (1976) identifies six developmental processes that appear to be associated with communication competence. These six are interaction strategies, role-taking, play, referential communication, reasoning, and persuasibility. In a description of a more specific developmental process, Labov (1965) describes six steps in a process of adapting to standard communication codes. These six steps include 1) acquisition of basic grammar, 2) adaption of local vernacular, 3) recognition of social significance of different dialects, 4) adaption of speech to meet formal situations, 5) adaption of standard speech consistently, and 6) use of full range of speech skills. The progress of recognizing and conforming to language norms indicates a level of communication competence (Mead, (1977). While not exhaustive, these examples can be seen as representative of a fifth class of dimensions that can be associated with the theory of communication competence.

These five areas appear to cover the range of dimensions proposed in the study of communication competence. If a theory of communication competence is to be developed that accounts for knowledge and behavior in everyday communication situations,

then each of these areas will need to be considered.

CONCLUSION

The goal of any theory is to be both precise and powerful (Dubin, 1969). Powerful in its ability to clearly explain the phenomenon under consideration, precise enough to predict future occurances of the phenomenon. This paper has discussed four issues which effect the precision and the power of a theory of communication competence. These included issues concerning the definition of competence, the possession of competence, the criteria by which competence is recognized, and dimensions of communication competence. If a theory is to be developed that will have an impact on the classroom, then these issues need to be resolved.

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